

POULTRY SELLING.

A Sensible Discussion of Marketing to the Best Advantage.

A paper written by P. H. Sprague, of Chicago, read before the National Fanciers' Association of Chicago, at the Sherman house, Chicago, Sept. 6, 1899.

Mr. President and Members of the National Fanciers' Association of Chicago:

It has been to me a matter of wonderment that I should have been selected from all your number to prepare this paper. I very much preferred the work should have been done by another. Perhaps your secretary thought I was the proper one, hence felt justified in so insistently urging it upon me, because of my connection for many years with the business of selling poultry supplies and poultry and eggs of all kinds. While I have since very much regretted that I gave way to that insistent urging and consented to do this work, and while I very much doubt the wisdom of the selection made, yet I do not think it exactly egotism to say I feel that the transacting of a business of \$1,500 per day on an average for every day in the year may in some sense have been a preparation for the task; therefore, such thoughts as are here presented have been suggested by knowledge gained by actual personal experience.

I do not propose, however, to treat the subject from the standpoint of the commission merchant, but rather from that of the fancier and farmer. What I have learned as a commission merchant in a somewhat expensive school is too valuable to give away to the one hundred or more keen competitors right here in Chicago, all of them doing as large and some of them a larger business than myself. There are no combinations or trusts in this branch of trade; every one for himself is the rule, and success is only looked for as the result of reputation obtained by faithful work and honest dealing.

I say fancier and farmer, and of course, when I mention farmer I mean poultry farmer, either exclusively as such or in connection with the production of other kinds of stock or grains, and I put the two, fancier and farmer, in one classification, because I believe there should be little difference between them. No one will deny that the more of a fancier the farmer becomes, the greater will be his success, and if the fancier does not to some extent adopt the methods of the farmer he will always be a purchaser of specimens rather than a seller. The farmer can do better with the fancier's thoroughbred than with mongrels, and the fancier, who does not raise enough to properly cull, is making no advancement.

To sell poultry successfully we must first have the stuff to sell. Our object must be to get the best price for the best article; to sell an inferior article for the highest price may be an accomplishment of the clever man, but it is one that is not only somewhat rare, but very dangerous. If detected its possession is a detriment to the possessor. If a new customer could be found for each sale it would not make so much matter, but when we consider that one sale is but the first should be right.

To produce the best article of either fowl or egg necessitates much of painstaking preparation, and much of daily detail and labor. To be sure specimens for show and market can be produced without this, but they will not be the best. Surely the satisfaction, to say nothing of the profit of obtaining the highest reward is enough to pay for the effort.

In the beginning the producer should aim to produce that for which he can obtain the best return. A careful study should be made of the wants of the market he is going to supply; that, which will be just right for one, will not do

perhaps for another. Chickens with white skin are in greatest favor in some places, while others prefer those having a yellow hue. Bantams and exhibition or ornamental specimens are not in as great demand in the country or smaller towns as in the larger places. High prices, usually denominated "fancy" will often be obtained from the patron, who enthusiastically keeps a few for pleasure, that from the large breeder, who systematically works for profit only. One desires brown, another white eggs. Broilers sell well in some places in others are in no demand. Capons are sometimes in demand, in some places are unknown. Location, including transportation rates, must also be taken into account.

Oftentimes a market does not know a really good thing, because it has never had it; in such cases it may well be worth while to introduce it, but such attempts should always be with great caution and on a small scale. If the demand is established, it is always easy to increase the supply.

With a knowledge of what is most desirable proper preparation in the way of getting the best, and the appliances for rearing it, must be made. With these secured the daily detail and labor of successful progress must be faithfully attended to. Remember, it is the very best we are aiming to produce. The specimens neglected for but a single day will not be as good as that always faithfully cared for. Perfection in poultry either for fancy or market stock can only be secured by having the right kind of care. The most and best eggs are produced in like manner.

It does not pay to raise mongrel stock. No one is justified in wasting time on mongrels. It is the same with poultry as with horses, cattle, sheep or hogs. The most money is to be made with thoroughbreds. It costs no more to raise pure blooded fowls than mongrels, and if you already have a stock of common poultry, you should sell off and buy full blooded ones, all of one breed.

Now in regard to marketing, and what follows applies more particularly to the Chicago market, with which I am most familiar. The best kind of chicken is a plump fowl with yellow skin, such as the Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte, Light Brahma, Leghorn or in fact, almost any chicken with light feathers. Stock of this kind dresses out yellow, and will always bring the top of the market. Dark feathered poultry, when dressed out, has a dark blue skin, and it always sells at a lower price than light colored stock.

The best breed of chickens for broilers is Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte and Light Brahma. The chicks should be hatched in January and February. It is hard to get hens to set in winter and is almost necessary for the farmer to use incubators to raise broilers in time to bring the best prices. The incubator on the farm is being brought to more profitable use every year. There is no doubt that the incubator and brooder method of raising chickens is a wonderful improvement on the hen method. It is cheaper and a greater number of fowls can be raised from the same number of eggs. Hens can be made to lay nearly double as many eggs if they are not required to set, and it is a good plan to use incubators instead of taking the hens from their work. The incubator is no longer an experiment. There are several first class machines on the market, and no mistake can be made in buying any one of half a dozen leading machines, which are guaranteed to give satisfaction.

The breed of turkeys raised does not make so much difference as the breed of chickens. Any kind of turkey will bring the market price, if it is plump and fat, although the Bronze seems to be the best all-around breed, and the blooded stock will fatten more quickly and at less expense than the common run of fowls.

In raising ducks never keep anything but white feathered stock. The Pekin duck is the best and always brings the top of the market.

With geese only the largest breeds should be kept. The Toulouse, African, or any other large breed is all right, and it costs no more to raise a large bird than a small one. The market is never overstocked on large, fat geese.

The best season, in which to sell chickens, is from the first of Jan-

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uary to the first of November. Every farmer seems to want to dispose of his poultry during November and December, and consequently the market is always overstocked at that time. The surplus young roosters should be sold during September and October, as they will bring more money than later. If it is impossible to market them until after that time, it is best to hold them until after the first of January, for prices are always low during the intervening months. Turkeys are most salable around the holidays. Old turkeys and large young gobblers should be marketed for Thanksgiving and Christmas; poor stock should never be sent to the market. All should be well fattened before being shipped. The hens and small young gobblers should be kept until after the holidays.

The appearance of poultry has more to do with the selling of it than the kind of packages in which it is shipped.

In selecting a shipment of poultry for the market the breeder will find it to be of advantage to have his birds of uniform size. They look better and neater and will bring a higher price. Pack them all neatly, for appearance has much to do with finding a market for them. Handle the carcass so carefully that the light outer skin will not be broken. The skin under skin showing through in spots detracts from their appearance.

There is one thing which breeders generally overlook and that is the saving of feathers. While it might not pay to save feathers from a few fowls, it would undoubtedly pay well where a large number are dressed out, and thus the fowls would contribute their last item to the poultry fund.

P. H. SPRAGUE.

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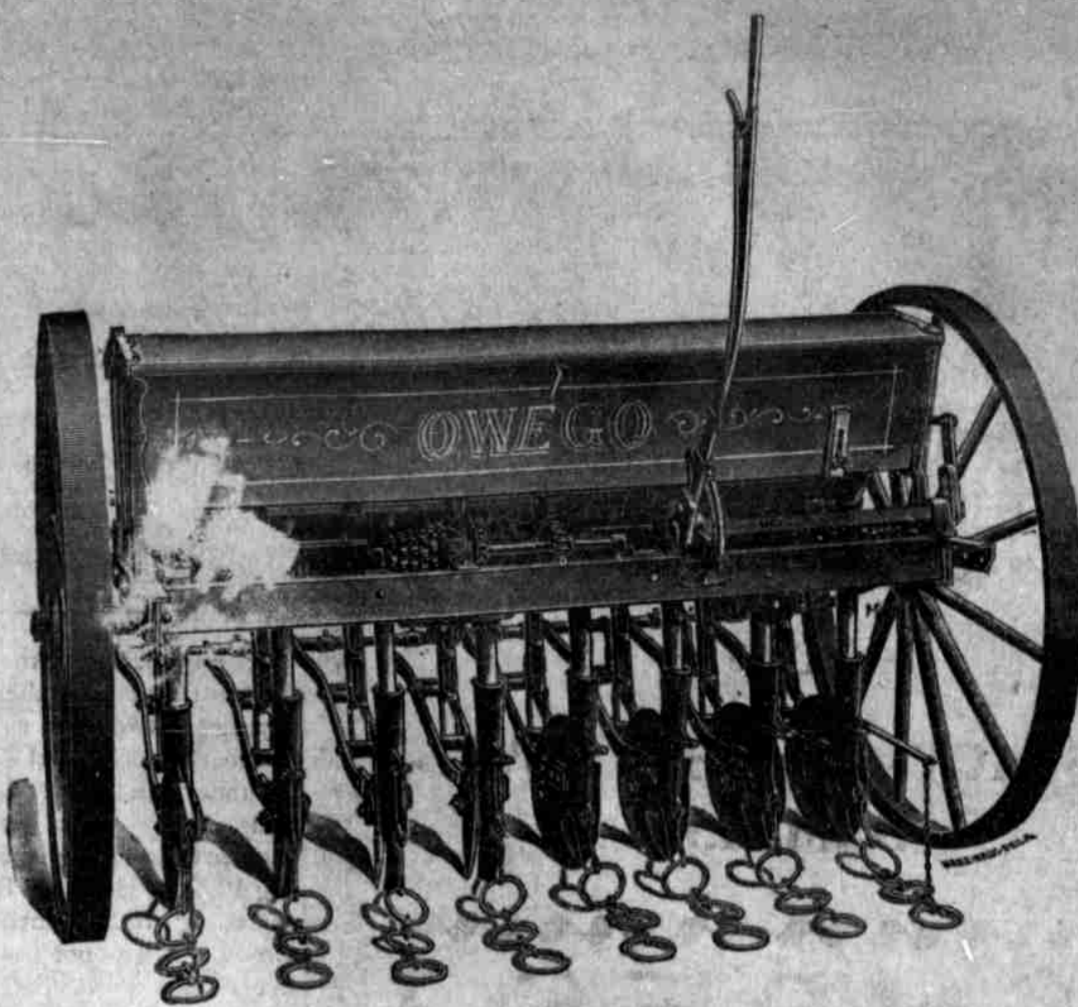
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